

US EPA RECORDS CENTER REGION 5



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Workers from McCabe Engineering and Construction of Richfield clean out a spot where they had just cleaned a container used to haul contaminated soil at the former Mahoningside Generating

Plant in Warren. The plastic-coated suits worn by the workers have a chemical sealant to keep contaminated materials from touching their bodies.

EPA continues plant cleanup

PCB-content test results expected early next year

By **JOE LAWLOR**
Tribune Chronicle

WARREN — Donning white plastic suits outfitted with respirators, workers Tuesday sprayed down a large container that had held contaminated materials.

The workers were helping with the cleanup of the former Mahoningside Generating Plant, a project that was taken over by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency this fall. The city had originally overseen the project, but when Warren ran out of money, the U.S. EPA stepped in. The city wants the site, which is on prime riverfront property, to be cleaned up so the land can be redeveloped.

Mark Durno, the EPA's on-site coordinator, said what will happen next depends a lot on testing. The U.S. EPA is testing 20 feet underneath the basement and in areas surrounding the site to see if polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs,

have spread from the site to the surrounding environment. A big concern is whether PCBs, a carcinogen, have infiltrated the Mahoning River. A pipe going from the former site that drained into the Mahoning River contained PCBs, Durno said.

He said the U.S. EPA also is going to test the Mahoning River for possible contamination.

Durno said because no water wells surround the former site off Tod Avenue N.W., the drinking water supply is not threatened.

But a significant threat to the environment is a possibility, depending on the test results, Durno said. The initial test results are expected early next year, Durno said.

Durno said the U.S. EPA only becomes involved in cleanup sites when the EPA believes a potential, immediate threat exists.

The discovery of PCBs this spring by McCabe Engineering of Richfield caught the attention of U.S. EPA officials.

Durno said in one sump in the basement of the site, the EPA discovered 6,000 parts per million of PCBs. The U.S. EPA standards show it's dangerous when PCBs reach more than 50 parts per million.

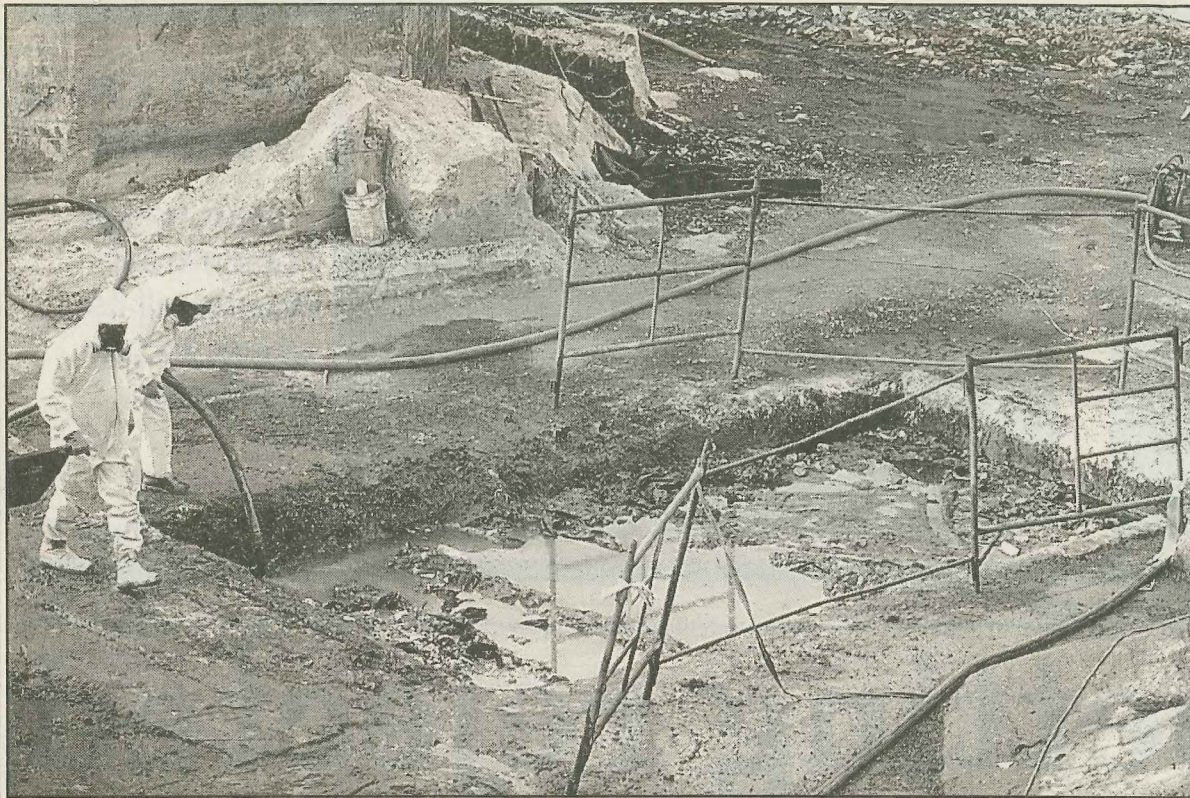
The PCBs originally were used in oils as insulation at the power plant, Durno said.

"They're difficult to clean up because they're persistent. They don't break down naturally very easily," Durno said. "So if they get into your body, they're persistent in your body, too."

The EPA does everything to ensure contracted workers don't come into contact with the PCBs, Durno said.

Using a large vacuum-like machine,

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Workers dressed in hazardous-waste suits from McCabe Engineering and Construction decontaminate a container that was used to haul contaminated

soil from the Mahoningside Generating Plant site. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is overseeing the cleanup of the site in Warren.

EPA

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the workers have been sucking contaminated soils from the pipes and sumps in the basement of the turn-of-the-century power plant. They hauled out more than 300 tons of the contaminated materials.

The containers then have to be decontaminated before they are

allowed to be put back into general usage.

Eric Bowman, senior response manager for Environmental Quality Management, the main contractor on the site, said each container is washed three times with high-pressure hoses before being put back into general use.

On Tuesday, Bowman explained, the workers had to dress in hazardous waste suits to enter the "hot zone," which is the

basement of the site. The plastic suits with a chemical sealant can become stifling hot.

Tuesday's weather was perfect for the workers, but even a 65-degree day can be unbearably hot, Durno said. He said in hot weather, they take frequent breaks.

"I've gone onto a site when it's hot before, and when I took my boots off, I poured the sweat out onto the ground," Durno said.